

BOOK REVIEW

THE SEISMICITY OF TURKEY AND ADJACENT AREAS. A HISTORICAL REVIEW, 1500–1800, by N. N. Ambraseys and C. F. Finkel, EREN, Istanbul, Turkey, 1995. No of pages: 240. Price: US\$ 25. ISBN 975-7622-38-9.

This slim paperback volume seems insubstantial compared to some of the first author's previous works of this type, but the content is equally valuable, and the remarkably low price will be welcomed.

As might be expected the book starts with an account of the historical background of the area and a discussion of sources, including a list of previously published catalogues. These make fascinating reading in themselves, but the main part of the book is devoted to detailed descriptions of the individual earthquakes, of which there are 377. Some are covered by a single line entry, while others warrant several pages of annotated description, and include maps showing areas of damage. The text is enlivened by several contemporary illustrations of damage. In this section we learn some of the difficulties encountered in this type of work, such as trouble in deciphering smudged marginal notes (09 June 1704) and clues to the dating of documents given by watermarks on the paper (22 May 1766). There are also insights into activities of the times, such as looting following an earthquake near Izmir in 1688, and a report that following the shock in Bolu in 1668 "... water channels and toilets ... of the women's section (of the mosque remained) damaged, owing to the embezzlement of the funds earlier allotted for repairs". Earthquake-related problems appear to

have changed little! Again, following an earthquake in 1784 villagers were "completely wretched. . and therefore ask to be exempted from certain of this year's taxes. . ."

Although the period of the study is 300 years, one is struck by the repeated references to earthquakes at the same localities, not only Istanbul, but particularly Izmir. The commercial importance of the latter ensured that there were many foreign posts and enterprises there to see that events were properly documented.

Locality maps are provided for the larger events but rather surprisingly considering the first author's previous work, no attempt has been made to show intensities or delineate felt or epicentral areas.

After the descriptive section there follows a chronological list of the events with their area of occurrence. Again, there is no indication given here of the size of the earthquake; it is only by referring to the main descriptive section that this may be assessed. Finally, before the references and index is a glossary of the most commonly used Turkish terms in the text; this might have been placed earlier, for I had read much of the descriptive section before I discovered it.

The book is pleasantly produced and clearly printed, and I was not conscious of misprints. It will be greatly valued by those with a special interest in the region, or with a serious interest in the documenting of historical earthquakes and their effects.

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